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Utilizing music and movement as a means of transition

Lisa Cioffi

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UTILIZING MUSIC AND MOVEMENT AS A MEANS OF TRANSITION

by
Lisa A. Cioffi

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Teacher Education
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Sciences in Teaching
at
Rowan University

Thesis Chair: Dr. Valarie Lee

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my family and friends who have supported my every endeavor with love and encouragement even during the toughest of times.

Acknowledgments

To all of those who have contributed to creating my ambitions and dreams, I thank you. I would be as driven and motivated as I am today if it were not for all of the students and exceptional educators I have met along the path of my educational journey. The potential, personality, and enthusiasm found within each and every student with whom I have been blessed to meet has genuinely inspired me to be the best educator I can possibly be.

This is also for my peers in my Collaborative Teaching cohort. Over the course of five years we have become a close knit family of friends; one I will take with me forever no matter where life's journey may take me. If it were not for our trust and collaboration with one another I would not know the true meaning of a learning community nor all of the various benefits it may bring. For all of your support, encouragement and inspiration I genuinely thank you.

Last but not least, this is also for my mother, father, two younger brothers and boyfriend; all of whom have never lost their trust or support in my ability to succeed in all that I do. Without their genuine love and encouragement I would not be the individual I am today. For all that they have done and all that they continue to do I express perpetual gratitude.

Abstract

Lisa Cioffi

UTILIZING MUSIC AND MOVEMENT AS A MEANS OF TRANSITION

2010-11

Dr. Valarie Lee

Master of Sciences in Teaching

The purpose of this teacher research was to examine the effects of a transition infused with music and movement may have on the classroom environment and the students within the setting. This study was conducted within a first grade general education classroom with a total of eighteen student participants. The students were included in the production of the transition through interviews and questionnaires in which each student had the opportunity to express his or her opinions regarding specific songs and movements he or she identified with relaxation. The students were then provided the experience of executing the music and movement based transition at a specific time on a daily basis for two full school weeks. Data for this study was collected through structured teacher discussions, student interviews, student questionnaires, video recordings of the transitions, and teacher/researcher observations and journal. This study's findings suggest that a transition infused with music and movement may have a positive effect upon the classroom learning environment, student as individuals and the teacher-researcher as well.

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Chapter One

Scope of the Study

Introduction

“Through movement and song, the human discovers continuity and coherence and works out an interior order which requires a balance of feeling with thought in the very act of composing and singing the song” (Sillick, 1996, p. 83).

As human beings we have been programmed to utilize and learn from movement and sound. Children in particular have a strong nature of movement and innate need for movement on a daily basis. When educators ignore this fact, children are left sitting for long periods of time without any breaks from academic activities (Montessori, 1963).

Purpose Statement

In today’s educational realm, many professionals are fixated upon standardized tests and the implications they can create. In order to meet state and national standards efficiently, teachers are constantly pressured to “teach to the test” with the hopes of generating students who will score proficiently and beyond on the standardized tests which assess both teachers and students. Additionally, the results of standardized tests are used to assess not only the performance of teachers and students, but also to determine student academic placement, graduation opportunity, school reputability, district funding, and teacher salary (Smyth, 2008). Because of the pressure of high-stakes testing, instruction often involves less exploratory learning, and focuses solely on “teaching to the test through drill and kill” methods. “The tests have turned into the objective of classroom instruction rather than the measure of teaching and learning” (Smyth, 2008, p.135).

The “drill and kill” methods of teaching Smyth refers to revolve around subjects that are assessed with the standardized tests, leading to an absence of specific subjects within the classroom environment. Howard Gardner (1993) writes how the arts are the first to be eliminated from instruction when pressures are placed upon teachers to “teach to the test” even though the arts, specifically music and movement, have been proven to stimulate brain activity and lead to an overall improvement in learning (Jensen, 1998). Research shows a lack of musical incorporation found within the classroom because teachers feel too pressured to “teach to the test” and do not want to waste time that could be utilized for “academic instruction” on music and other areas not addressed in standardized testing (Giles & Frego, 2004). Regular education teachers constantly point the finger at gym teachers and music teachers for the responsibility of incorporating movement and music into a student’s day, rather than take on the accountability themselves because of the stress placed upon them from standardized testing (Giles & Frego, 2004).

The “drill and kill” methods of teaching not only eliminate a student’s opportunity to learn about subjects beyond the test, but also often limit the amount of positive experiences a child can have with learning, ultimately leading to an increase in school related stress (Smyth, 2008; Jensen, 1998). In order to off-set the anxiety brought on by the pressures of standardized testing, the incorporation of movement, yoga in particular, can be used to help relieve students of stress, calm the mind, and revitalize attentiveness (Stanec, Forneris & Theuerkauf, 2010). Yoga techniques and instruction have been incorporated into the classroom environment to produce positive outcomes regarding students’ levels of self-esteem, reduced levels of stress, higher academic achievement,

and an overall increase in positive behavior (Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003). Through providing opportunities for all students to experience success, while improving physical and mental health, yoga enhances a student's ability to self-regulate and recognize stress within the body ultimately leading to a calmer state of mind (Stanec, Forneris & Theuerkauf, 2010). When a student has a relaxed mind, body and brain the thinking process is elevated and can be performed more efficiently with less strain placed on the learner (Sillick, 1996).

Although research has addressed the subjects of incorporating music into the classroom and incorporating relaxing movement into the classroom as separate academic tools, there is a lack of data concerning the effects of combining music and movement together into a specific teaching technique for the classroom. Specifically, there is a gap in research regarding the use of music and movement as a means of transition into the classroom and within the classroom.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

What exactly happens when music and movement are infused together to create a method of transition for the classroom? Can a transition involving music and movement be utilized in such a way that it increases relaxation, stress reduction, concentration, attentiveness, and overall positive attitude within the classroom environment?

Story of the Question

Ever since I was a little girl I constantly walked with a bit more than just pep in my step. For as long as I can remember I have danced from room to room in my house humming and singing whichever tune was stuck in my head at the time. I carried myself in this rhythmic movement wherever I went; everywhere except the classroom that is. In

second grade, my teacher laid down her ground rules on day one and from then on I knew that I was expected to sit still and quietly, as well as walk “properly” whenever we had to move. I learned very quickly that I was to sit quietly and walk straight throughout the school day, but my curiosity as to why I should have stuck with me through all of these years. As the years progressed, I continuously could not help but wonder if there was a variety of ways to incorporate some sort of movement and rhythm within the classroom. Sitting calmly and quietly all day always negatively affected the way I viewed school. Sure I had music class and physical education on at least one day of each week, but this was not enough to suit my developing mind. Why did my teachers always seem to leave out music and movement in the classroom year after year?

My Practicum I placement granted me the opportunity to observe the benefits of incorporating music and movement into the classroom first hand, lifting the negative impression my second grade teacher had bestowed upon me. It was Mrs. A.’s kindergarten class that really opened my eyes to the possible experiences and opportunities combining music and movement together could grant children within the classroom. To my surprise the curriculum in the kindergarten class was very much structured to “teach to the test”. Not only were the students expected to learn basic knowledge about the seasons and how to write correctly, but they were also being pushed to learn content knowledge that would benefit them for the first grade.

The school had just adopted a new reading program when I began my placement which was based upon an all-day kindergarten curriculum. Mrs. A. found herself puzzled and confused when asking the principal what she should do because their school clearly had a half day kindergarten program. The principal simply told Mrs. A. to “cut out the

fluff stuff” and “teach to the test.” Even with the pressure to teach only textbook knowledge in kindergarten, my cooperating teacher, Mrs. A, attempted to preserve and create an uplifting, youthful kindergarten classroom through the use of movement and song.

Although the pressure to teach to the test limited Mrs. A.’s ability to deviate from academic content, she still managed to incorporate movement and musical aspects into her daily routine during the morning circle time and as a means of transition. Circle time included a lot of song and dance, and the students always bounced around excitedly when Mrs. A. put on a morning song which the class referred to as the “wobble” song. The wobble song allowed for the students to express themselves while moving to music. Every day after the wobble song Mrs. A. would play one last, soothing tune to serve as a transitional cue and to help relax the students while they walked back to their seats. While walking back to their assigned seats the students seemed much calmer as they would all follow routine and prepare themselves to begin the day’s first lesson. Mrs. A. found a way to utilize music and movement as a form of transition which appeared to help the students relax and focus.

During the second half of my placement, which took place in a self-contained setting with Mrs. S., I was granted the opportunity to witness the use of relaxing movements while observing occupational therapy once a week. Typically when the students returned from recess they were still excited and rambunctious from recess with their friends. Mrs. S. implemented reading time when the students arrived back from lunch and recess as a means of transition back into the academic mind set. On Tuesdays, however, the students began occupational therapy right after returning from lunch and

recess, eliminating the daily reading time to transition. During one session in particular with the occupational therapist the students quickly relaxed from their usual rowdiness, while being engaged in yoga with Yogarilla.

Yogarilla is an educational program, great for teachers, parents, occupational therapists, and physical therapists, used to teach children yoga in an interactive and stimulating way. The set of Yogarilla cards contains over fifty descriptive cards, each with a picture, explanation, accommodations, extensions and activities revolving around one specific yoga pose. While instructing the students through the use of Yogarilla, the occupational therapist also put ocean sounds on as background music to help aid in the relaxation process. The students responded extremely well to the instruction and took the practice really seriously. Never before had I seen my students transform to become so engaged, quiet and focused in such an instance. Additionally, the students were so eager to perform yoga that they even convinced the occupational therapist to stay a few minutes longer to help them with the poses. Even after the occupational therapy session was over the students still appeared quite a bit calmer than they typically did after the use of reading time. From this experience, and the experiences in Mrs. A.'s classroom, I generated the research question regarding the effects of infusing music and movement together to create a method of transition for the classroom.

Organization of Thesis

The chapters to follow take an in-depth look at the effectiveness of using music and movement as a means of transition for the classroom. Chapter two seeks to provide the reader with research regarding the use of music and movement within the classroom. It begins with a review of the brain's main components and their relationship to the

learning process, followed by stressors today's educational routines place upon a student's brain. The literature review continues with an examination of transitions and transitional methods. Chapter two then addresses research regarding music and movement within the classroom, concluding with a discussion of research concerning the infusion of music and movement into classroom instruction.

Chapter three provides the reader with the detailed context in which this study takes place, as well as the research design and methodology active throughout this study. The fourth chapter consists of a data analysis which examines the results of this study. The fifth and final chapter addresses the study's conclusion and limitations, as well as implications for further research.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Traditional methods of instruction and assessment found in the education realm today have very explicit definitions of what should be learned and what concepts should be mastered. Additionally, curriculums are focused around “teaching to the test” with the implication of producing students who will achieve high standardized test scores. The standardized tests often leave little, if any, room for teachers to incorporate other skills, intelligences, and teaching methods into the classroom. Howard Gardner, father of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences, developed the term “uniform view of schooling” for the forced homogenized curriculum, which ignores the individual’s needs as a learner (1993). With such pressure on teachers to successfully instruct students to perform well on standardized tests, each and every school day is packed with as much academic instruction as possible. Learning is a process which occurs on a combination of levels, including physical, emotional, and mental although instruction typically focuses solely upon the mental level (Sillick, 1996). Learning involves one’s body and brain, therefore includes levels varying from cellular to behavioral, but “the daily chemistry of our brain adds great intricacy to the question, ‘How does the brain learn?’” (Jensen, 1998, p. 24).

Much of this instruction requires students to remain seated for prolonged periods of time throughout the school day, consequently limiting blood and oxygen flow to the brain (Jensen, 2002). A decrease in blood flow to the brain means less oxygen and nourishment reach the different parts of the brain through the blood vessels, arteries, capillaries, and veins, ultimately restraining the brain’s abilities and chemistry leading

students to become fatigued and inattentive (Jensen, 2000). As Sillick explains, “lifestyle changes in our society are presenting educators with new challenges, especially for the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, which needs active engagement to come to full flowering” thus limiting a student’s ability to flourish entirely (1995, p. 83). Suggestions have been made to utilize exercise breaks, lasting only a few minutes, as transitions into and within the classroom whenever needed in order to help students refocus and adjust to classroom demands (Sweeney, 1987; Mulrine, Prater & Jenkins, 2008).

The research within this literature review addresses what happens when techniques utilizing music and movement are incorporated into the classroom. It begins with a basic review of the human brain’s main components and their appropriate functions, and is followed by challenges today’s educational routines place upon the brain. Next the review provides information regarding transitions, followed by research on musical and bodily-kinesthetic methods. Finally, research concerning the infusion of music and movement into instruction is discussed.

Tapping into the Brain and its Attributes

Learning is a process which occurs on a combination of levels, including physical, emotional, and mental. Learning involves one’s body and brain, therefore includes levels varying from cellular to behavioral, “yet our behaviors are governed by our complex emotional states and memories. The daily chemistry of our brain adds great intricacy to the question, ‘How does the brain learn?’” (Jensen, 1998, p.24). The human brain contains multiple different segments, each designated to contribute to specific bodily functions. By engaging and awakening more areas of the brain, through stimulation such as movement and music, the brain can function on a greater multitude of levels.

Essentially the overall learning process is enhanced when one takes into consideration how the brain functions and the attributes to the way the brain functions. Within the brain, “learning is a critical function of neurons that cannot be accomplished individually”, but rather requires a group of neurons to make connections among one another (Jensen, 1998, p. 43).

The brain has five major components, each of which performs specific functions: the cerebrum, cerebellum, pituitary gland, brain stem, and the hypothalamus. The pituitary gland, which is very small, controls hormones and regulates the body’s metabolism. The hypothalamus is also extremely small and is used to regulate the body’s temperature. The brain stem, another small area of the brain, is extremely important because it connects the brain to the rest of the body and also controls involuntary movements needed for survival. The cerebrum is the largest part of the brain, comprising 85% of the brain’s weight, and is responsible for thinking and reasoning (Jensen, 2000). Additionally, long term and short term memories are stored within the cerebrum. The cerebrum has two halves, each known to be responsible for specific areas of strength. The left half has been known to be more analytical, while the right side has been recognized to think more abstractly (Jensen, 2000).

The cerebellum, area of the brain most commonly linked to movement, only comprises one-tenth of the brain’s volume but it contains over half of the brain’s total neurons. It has about forty million nerve fibers, which far exceeds any other portion of the brain. Additionally, the millions of nerve fibers found within the cerebellum feed information from the cerebral cortex, part of the cerebrum used for thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving, to the cerebellum and also from the cerebellum to the cerebral

cortex. The cerebellum is used to filter and integrate abundances of incoming data in refined ways that allow for complex decision making. Further research has identified pathways from the cerebellum back to parts of other brain involved with memory, spatial perception, attention, and emotional behavior, indicating that the cerebellum is processing not only movement, but learning and emotional responses as well (Jensen, 2000).

Strains upon the Brain and Learning

Throughout a typical academic school day a student may face many different stressors in any given environment or situation. In addition to stressful situations and circumstances, an individual experiences patterns of attentional highs and lows throughout a given day which is quite natural and can be found within each and every person. The specific term for these brain cycles of attention are “ultradian rhythms”, which occur approximately 16 times a day, lasting anywhere from ninety to one hundred and ten minutes (Jensen, 1998). During these cycles the brain actually shifts its cognitive abilities due to a change in blood flow and breathing during the cycle process, leading to a reduction of oxygen-enriched blood flowing to the brain, ultimately negatively affecting learning. One fifth of the body’s oxygen is used by the brain, and the more oxygen the brain receives, and the better quality of the air, the higher the levels of attentiveness and mental functioning will become. Students reaching the low point of an attention cycle may appear tired, inattentive, and unfocused within the classroom while the real problem could easily be solved through movement and stimulation.

Many students who appear unfocused are assumed to have an attention deficit, when their real problems may stem from “crowded classrooms, a teacher who demands

an inappropriate amount of classroom attention or a lack of self-discipline skills” (Jensen, 1998, p. 34). In order to send good quality air to the brain, one must utilize movement, stretches, and deep breathing to increase oxygen-rich blood flow. Many students do not have the opportunity to breathe deeply because of stress placed upon them, as well as the lack of time to relax, de-stress and unwind within the classroom. Original movements shift focus in the brain, integrating and engaging several different areas of the brain that perform various functions (Jensen, 1998). Research suggests rather than fighting fatigued students, take advantage of the opportunity to increase students’ focus, energy, and attention through the use of simple movements and brain stimulating methods which increase blood-flow to and activity within the brain (Jensen, 1998, Mulrine, Prater, Jenkins, 2008).

Stress is another factor which plays a large role with regards to a brain’s ability to function and process information clearly. Stress may be caused by pressure to perform well academically, lack of structure, or may be caused by a number of other factors depending on the individual student. Chronic stress releases chemicals that kill neurons in the critical area of the brain used for long-term memory formation, the hippocampus (Brink, 1995). Threats and stress should be viewed from a student’s perspective, and may include possible embarrassment, feeling incompetent, fear of discipline, or even anxiety to perform well. “The brain can literally grow new connections with environmental stimulation” where there is a lack of stress, because sensory stimulation serves as a brain “nutrient” and the mind learns best when it is relaxed (Jensen, 1998, p. 46). One way to stimulate the learning environment and students’ brains is through the use of enriched, but structured, transitions.

Transitions and the Classroom

Transitions take place within the classroom, as well as to and from the classroom, on a daily basis in every academic setting. Transitions are challenging to both teachers, as well as students, because it serves as a juggling act of a number of activities including organization of students and materials, movements to new locations, and management of students' behaviors (Buck, 1999). Transitions from one lesson or class to another are difficult and stressful for some students, including those with attention disorders and those who are easily distracted. This is especially true when transitioning from activities demanding different intensity levels. By having a means to transition students back into the classroom routine, the students are more likely to regain concentration and stay on task (Mulrine, Prater & Jenkins, 2008). In many classroom settings, ineffective transition time is spent sitting with students seated at their desks, lacking a stimulation needed in order to "help students mentally prepare for task shifts and to be better positioned for learning" ultimately leading to a more tensed state (Mulrine, Prater & Jenkins, 2008).

Many methods of transition can be found within the educational setting today, including giving students visual cues, time cues, musical cues, and movement cues (Buck, 1999; Sweeney, 1987). Sweeney (1987) suggests incorporating simple stretching and breathing exercises as transitions into the classroom as a way to help students refocus, increase attention and relax, but music has also been proven to help calm students and reduce stress within the classroom (Jensen, 2000). When a transition activity involving a specific prompt, such as a specific piece of music, is part of the everyday classroom routine, it serves as a cue for students to transition to the next activity giving structure and boundaries to the classroom (Buck, 1999).

The Benefits of Musical Methods

Music can be used as a carrier of words, an arousal and as a primer for the brain. With regards to the brain and music, arousal means the music either increases or decreases the attention state of neurotransmitters (Jensen, 1998). It can either increase attention, or create a relaxed state of mind. Relaxing music has proven time and time again to provide significant positive effects on the state of a learner's brain. Music has actually been found to "prime" the brain's neural pathways, allowing the brain become more attentive and engaged. Neurons are constantly firing back and forth, but variables including speed, strength, and sequence of the connections constitute a pattern of firing that can be triggered by specific music. Further research has stipulated that the brain may in fact be wired to utilize the "building blocks of music" to help aid in the development of the brain and its functions (Jensen, 1998).

Musical Intelligence has two components to it allowing an individual to perform or write music, as well as hear and appreciate it (Thompson & MacDougall, 2002). Music allows an individual to move one's body and allows an individual to convey, capture and explain emotions and feelings. According to Jensen (2000), music elicits emotional responses and receptive states, and stimulates creativity, sensitivity, and thinking, all while stimulating the limbic system, found within the cerebrum portion of the brain. The limbic system is a region of the brain that is directly involved in "engaging musical and emotional responses, as well as mediating long-term memory. This means that when information is imbued with music, there's a greater likelihood that the brain will encode it in long-term memory" because music is an efficient transporter of information. Jensen also explains how music can prime the brain's neural pathways, initiating the thought and

retention processes within those involved by altering physiological states, ultimately stating that as educators many of us are under-utilizing music in the context of learning and missing out on a plethora of beneficial aspects (2002, p. 28). With the ever demanding times of “teaching to the test” more and more instruction time is being focused on teaching subjects which will be formally assessed leaving a small fraction of time available to teach other subject areas, music included. Giles and Frego (2004) conducted a study to investigate the amount and specific forms of music integration occurring in the elementary classroom. The researchers conducted their investigation in three different urban Midwest schools, closely studying eighteen classroom teachers divided evenly amongst grades one, three and six. The research was intentionally not conducted in a fourth grade classroom, because a state test is issued during that year of elementary school (Giles & Frego, 2004).

Teachers were interviewed, issued questionnaires, and observed in order to gather data regarding each individual’s teaching style and integration of music within the classroom. Data resulted in the findings that the majority of teachers, thirteen of eighteen, used music in a subservient style, meaning music was used as a support system for and to enhance other academic subjects (Giles & Frego, 2004). Additionally, nine of the eighteen teachers also admitted to using an affective style of music infusion, meaning they use music to help classroom management, as well as to enhance the mood, tone, and overall environment of the classroom. Half of the teachers admitted to incorporating less than fifteen minutes of music a week into their classrooms, while the other nine teachers averaged the use of thirty minutes of music a week in order not to sacrifice ‘academic’ time (Giles & Frego, 2004). While teachers admitted to knowing the benefits music has

to offer to their students, many confessed that they “feel pressured to concentrate instruction time on subjects in which the students are required to take state-mandated proficiency tests” even though all three of the grades chosen for the study were chosen specifically because they did not have to administer state-mandated tests throughout the entire year (Giles & Frego, 2004, p. 16). Although music may not be assessed through the use of standardized testing, it may still be utilized within the classroom because of the many benefits it can offer on a multitude of levels (Jensen, 1998).

Music heavily relies upon the sense of hearing which can establish a relationship between music and the tactile sense experienced during activities involving movement. “The human sense of hearing has remarkable powers of pattern recognition”, which could be utilized through the sounds which comprise music (Root-Bernstein, 2001, p. 64). Through hearing music paired with another activity, a connection can be made within the brain, allowing that specific music “to activate the synaptic connections that had been previously established” each time the student hears a specific song or tune (Thompson & MacDougall, 2002, p. 46). Another extraordinary capability of the musical intelligence is its capacity to be closely tied to other intelligences on a multitude of levels (Nolen, 2003).

Why Bodily-Kinesthetic Methods Should Be Utilized Within a Classroom

“When we ignore the origin of things it is always a risky manner. The human person is a body, mind/brain, and spirit – three strands in a braid” (Sillick, 1996, p. 82). Sillick explains the importance of educating the whole child through acknowledging the importance of teaching to a child’s body and spirit as well as his or her mind in order to bridge the unnatural divide mainstream education has been creating. Innately in children,

and all human beings for that matter, there is a not only a need for, but also a natural instinct to learn, express, and explore through movement and experience (Sillick, 1996). Children react to the world in physical ways which stays with them even during elementary school, because “they still feel comfortable in that nonverbal language. To ignore this natural resource is a waste, a barrier to the process of education” (Griss, 1994, p. 78). Unfortunately, the kinesthetic component of learning is frequently disregarded even though it is an essential channel of experience that is beneficial to all, especially children who learn better “with hands and movement rather than visually or auditorially” unlike most instruction found within the classroom. Additionally, human beings, especially young children, experience and explore the world through movement, as well as utilizing it as a means of expression of emotions (Sillick, 1996).

“For years it seemed that the educational and scientific communities believed that thinking was thinking and movement was movement, and never the twain would meet” but now we know better, because significant gains in attention and comprehension can be seen from movement-based activities (Jensen, 1998, p. 17). The kinesthetic system provides information to the brain regarding body movement, registering what a specific movement feels like in action when it initially occurs so the body can later recall specific memories based on knowledge of past experiences with specific movements. By applying kinesthetic learning to the classroom children will be able to grasp, internalize and maintain abstract conceptual information through multiple senses, aiding in long term retention. Kinesthetic activities also allow a student with pent-up energy to express it creatively and appropriately, often leading to attained concentration and focus (Griss, 1994). Similar to the way kinesthetic activities cultivate the heart and muscles, exercise

also strengthens the cerebellum and the cerebrum, both key areas of the brain.

Additionally exercise fuels the brain with oxygen and “triggers the release of BDNF, a brain-derived neurotrophic factor” (Akaneya, Tsumoto, Kinoshita, & Hatanaka, 1997, p. 6711) that increases the ability of neurons to communicate with one another, thus improving cognition.

Sensory-motor experiences also directly feed into an individual’s pleasure center within the brain leading to a reduction in stress, enhanced relaxation, and improved self-esteem amongst students when incorporated into the academic curriculum, specifically when simple yoga techniques, stretches, and breathing exercises are involved (Jensen, 1998). Yoga, the art of bringing together the mind and body has long been used outside of the classroom for improved strength, flexibility, self-esteem, calm attitude, and overall wellbeing (Tummers, 2005). Slovacek, Tucker, and Pantoja founded the privately funded ‘Yoga Ed’ program with the intentions “to inspire, educate, facilitate, and support children in developing physical health, emotional intelligence and self-awareness through the experiential and transformational practices and tools of yoga” (2003, p. 2). The program instructs and encourages teachers to intertwine yoga instruction within the academic classroom in order to benefit students and the overall classroom environment.

The Yoga Ed program was researched by the founders in a K-8 California inner-city school charter school to determine the relationship of yoga instruction to several important student outcome variables; academic performance, discipline, attendance, and students’ attitudes (Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003). Participation in the study required students to take part in daily yoga classes, which resulted in very positive results. After participation in the study, researchers found a 20% increase in students’

self-esteem with an overwhelming positive response to the question “I like myself – I think I’m a great person”. Before the start of the study, only 30.9% of students agreed with the above statement regarding self-esteem but at the conclusion of the study over 51% of students agreed with the statement supporting an increase in positive self-esteem. Teachers interviewed regarding the process most often stated that yoga helped students deal with stress and improve attitudes regarding self-image (Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003). An improvement in academic performance and students’ grades showed a direct correlation to participation in yoga, significantly suggesting that students tend to benefit academically by practicing yoga regularly (Slovacek, Tucker & Pantoja, 2003). Diligent yoga practice also directly correlated with an increase in students’ behavior, leading to an overall decline in discipline problems.

Yoga can also serve as a vital tool for classroom environments through teaching children how to manage stress, ultimately contributing to an overall productive and relaxed environment. Yoga provides opportunities for all students to experience success while improving physical and mental help, while aiding in the development and enhancement of the ability to self-regulate in order to recognize stress and tension within the body (Stanec, Forneris & Theuerkauf, 2010; Seiler & Renshaw, 1978). In addition to beneficially supporting the physical and mental health of an individual, yoga can also help increase mental effectiveness and attention span through movements which sharpen concentration and attentiveness (Seiler & Renshaw, 1978). With regards to specific learners, yoga techniques have been proven effective as a teaching tool of students with behavioral problems, Downs Syndrome, cerebral palsy, autism, attention deficit

disorders, sensory issues, and learning difficulties through the many different techniques involving relaxation and concentration yoga instruction incorporates (Tummers, 2005).

Weaving Music and Movement Together

Gardner explicitly states how “one of the great pleasures in any intellectual realm inheres in an exploration of its relationship to other spheres of intelligence” (1983, p. 9). The ear directly links movement and music through its two functions: the vestibular function which aids balance and perceives movement and the auditory function which supports hearing. The functions of the ear are also greatly linked to cognition, because the vestibular system deals with slower processing information regarding the positions and movements of our body, while the auditory system receives the more rapid information like sounds within the immediate environment (Sillick, 1996). Movement and music also directly link to stimulation of the entire mind and body because music inspires the brain with sound energy, while movement invigorates the entire body. “Singing or chanting while moving is a near-perfect collaboration of the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of the whole person” (Sillick, 1996, p. 90).

Michigan State University biologist, historian, and artist, Robert S. Root-Bernstein, researches a term he coined synopsia, “to know and feel simultaneously in a multi-modal, synthetic way”, in order to prove how thinking is “trans-disciplinary and transferrable” from one field of intelligence to another (2001, p. 62). He strongly believes this theory to be true because of his study of many famous and renowned scientists, like Einstein and Richard Feynman, who excelled above and beyond in multiple fields. Additionally, Root-Bernstein believes that an individual’s skills or aptitude in several different areas of intelligence can be integrated together in order to yield effective results

(2001). More specifically, the researcher believes that music plays a very important role in his concept of synopsia, because music can be simultaneously emotional, analytical, and most of all kinesthetic since an individual must move in order to make music (Root-Bernstein, 2001). To further his theory, Root-Bernstein references how many scientists report working best to music, in addition to having ideas manifest themselves as sensory images, musical themes, or kinesthetic feelings before completely developing into fully structured theories or concepts thus furthering the connection between multiple intelligences (2001). The arts and movement can be used as exceptional forms of challenge and feedback for students, ultimately leading to the creation of more efficient learners.

Conclusion

In today's academic world, education and instruction is dependent upon standardized testing and the preparation students need in order to score well. Teachers focus upon "teaching to the test", leading to instruction which lacks the incorporation of subjects not assessed on standardized tests, and teaching methods in which students are seated for most of the academic day (Griss, 1994). With such a limited time for engagement, transitions are crucial to the overall learning environment but are too often disregarded as time frames to move as quickly as possible rather than utilized as opportunities to refocus students' concentration (Mulrine, Prater & Jenkins, 2008). As Jensen (1998) explains, the brain has many hidden talents and correlations to learning that one must take into consideration when instructing students, even during transition activities. Additionally, many outside factors can affect the brain's attentiveness, emotional state, and thought process including various instructional methods and

transitional techniques. Music in particular greatly affects the brain and has been linked to many positive developmental aspects regarding the brain. Music can also activate different areas and memories within the brain leading to an overall positive effect upon a student's learning (Jensen, 1998). Another factor upon the learning process is the need for oxygen-rich blood flow to the brain which is necessary for enhanced brain performance. Simple stretches and movements, especially yoga, increase the ability of neurons to communicate with one another, thus improving cognition and the overall state of mind (Jensen, 1998). Yoga can also be paired with music to help reduce stress and eliminate outside, distractible noises enhancing the experience and contributing to a more peaceful and relaxed environment (Tummers, 2005). Although we know what happens when music and music are incorporated into the classroom, what happens when music and movement are used as a method of transition? The upcoming chapter provides the detailed context in which the study takes place, as well as the research design and methodology active throughout the study. The fourth chapter contains a data analysis examining the results of this study and the final chapter addresses the study's conclusion, limitations and as well as implications for further research.

Chapter Three

Research Content and Design

Introduction

This chapter discusses the study implemented and the context in which the study was implemented. The purpose of the study is to examine the effects implementing a transition in which music and movement are combined can have upon students regarding relaxation, focus, and concentration, as well as the overall ebb and flow of the classroom.

For the purpose of this study I used a qualitative, teacher research approach because it allowed me to analyze the many facets of my study through various perspectives leading to a more comprehensive conclusion (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Additionally, teacher research allowed me to collect data from an inside perspective analyzing my “own questions, interpretative frameworks, changes in views over time, dilemmas, and reoccurring themes”, ultimately leading to a more complete understanding of the results (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 44). The qualitative paradigm supported my research because I focused upon outcomes and processes that are difficult to analyze using a scientific based approach and best analyzed using a broad range of data sources from students’ opinions to academic data. In order to collect data I conducted structured teacher discussions, student interviews, student questionnaires, open ended observations, and utilized video recordings in order to analyze the effects a music and movement based transition could have upon students and the classroom.

Context

As of 2009-2010 the Vineland Public School district educated over 9,900 students and contained 16 schools: eight elementary schools, four middle schools, two high

schools, one alternative school, and an adult education center. Vineland Public School district had an enrollment of 588 English Language Learners as students and 1,855 students with Individualized Education Plans. Vineland is a city located in Cumberland County, with a population of 58,271 as of the 2006 Census.

Zen Elementary School is a Title I School located in Vineland, New Jersey. It was re-established as an elementary school in 2006 and is the biggest elementary school in Vineland's district. In 2009-2010, this school provided education to 689 students in grades kindergarten through fifth, 74% of whom were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The percentage of students who spoke English as their first language at home was 83.3%, while 14.1% of students spoke Spanish as their first language at home and 3.1% of students were considered Limited English Proficient. According to the New Jersey Department of Education 2009-2010 School Report Card, the Zen Elementary School educated students in class sizes averaging twenty students per general education classroom, exceeding the state's average of 18 students per class. Additionally, the average of special education students per classroom was 13 at Zen Elementary School, while the state's average was only five. The student to faculty ratio for the 2009-2010 school year was 11.0, with the state average being 10.6.

This elementary school demonstrates the co-teaching model, in which both an elementary and a special education teacher collaboratively educate one class of students throughout the entire day. There is one co-teaching model implemented within each of the six grade levels. Zen Elementary School also provides the support of multiple resource rooms and six LLD classes; one per grade level. These special education services support the 16.3% of students enrolled who have an IEP. Additionally, the

school provides each of its students with exposure to technology, such as computers, with a ratio of 2.4 students per computer. On average Zen Elementary School spent approximately \$17,710 per student during the 2009-2010 school year.

The study conducted within this school involves a general education first grade classroom of 19 students, 11 girls and 8 boys. The data collected and presented during this study focuses only on those students who returned their permission slips, signed by their parent/guardian. Of the 19 students only one did not return a signed permission slip, therefore the study includes data collected upon 18 students, 11 girls and 7 boys.

Research Design/Methodology

This research study was conducted through a qualitative, teacher research approach rather than a quantitative approach which focuses upon variables determined to find the solution to a precise problem. Qualitative, teacher research was chosen for this study because it allowed the practitioner to examine her own inquiries and investigate the immediate classroom environment in a structured way, becoming deeply absorbed into the study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Qualitative research is dependent upon the natural setting. Observations and research took place within the subjects' natural environment in order to understand the real context of the situation. This form of research "involves the kinds of skills and classroom activities that are already part of the classroom environment" which allowed me, as a teacher researcher, to focus on transitions – an existing aspect of the school routine (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 3). Qualitative research permitted me to implement the study and focus on observing how the classroom and students responded on a multitude of levels to a transition infused with music and movement, as well as analyze the aspects through a variety of data collection

techniques.

Teacher research considers data to be a very broad category including a wide variety of students' work, assessments, behaviors, and opinions documented through methods ranging from formal assessments, interviews, questionnaires, and video recordings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Students' work and assessments within the classroom were reviewed and analyzed to identify any significant changes in students' academic achievement the transition may have caused. Questionnaires were utilized in this study to collect data upon each and every student on a more personal and emotional level.

Questionnaires, as well as interviews, provided the students with the opportunity to express personal feelings and thoughts without being overlooked. Questionnaires allowed the teacher researcher to utilize children's input and find out what each individual felt and thought about a specific topic, in this case music and movement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). At the initial stage of this study students were issued a questionnaire with picture cues and descriptions asking the students to identify feelings regarding four different pieces of music in order to gather data upon which music the students associated most with relaxation. This data was later used, in alignment with interviews regarding movement, to create a short music and movement based transitional routine, approximating seven to eight minutes.

One other imperative tool used in my study was independent student interviews. By interviewing students I had the opportunity to ask "questions to bring out the information we couldn't learn without getting inside our students' minds" (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 89). Student interviews and discussions were conducted on an individual

level at the very beginning of the research in order to help gather information regarding students' views of movements which aid in relaxation, prior to creating and implementing the transition. These interviews contained questions such as what do you do to calm down, show me some movements you do when you want to relax, do you take deep breaths to relax, do you stretch to relax. Independent student interviews were also conducted periodically throughout the study to track progress and included questions, but were not limited to, how did you feel before the transition, how does the transition make you feel, how do you feel after the transition, why do you think you feel better or worse after the transition. Structured discussions with my cooperating teacher were also conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the research study. Questions asked included, but were not limited to, how do you think the incorporation of movement and music is affecting your students, do you see a benefit from combining music and movement into one transition, do you see a change in your students, and on what levels do the changes take place if any.

To document the process and journey throughout this study I videotaped each time the transition was used, which allowed me to witness all that happened, as well as reanalyze and review the events from multiple perspectives. Videotapes grant the researcher the opportunity to document observations and examine “the role of body language or facial expressions, or for a closer look at several things that are happening all at once that might go unnoticed in a busy classroom” (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 98). Additionally videotaping the study granted me, as a teacher researcher, the opportunity to watch individual student actions and reactions to the exercises and music that may have otherwise been overlooked; an imperative component because the truth is often in the

unexpected, not the planned (Hubbard & Power, 1999).

Ultimately as a teacher researcher “you become your own most important tool” because you are so immersed in the environment which your research takes place (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 104). It is imperative to keep an open mind and stay willing to live in the moment in order to get the most of the experience within the classroom, ready at all times for whatever may come one’s way (Hubbard & Power, 1999).

Qualitative research is very flexible and as new information is discovered the researcher constantly tailors tentative guidelines to the specific students’ needs and experiences found within the study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). For these reasons and more the last vital tool I utilized is a teacher research journal to document my thoughts and what I witnessed. By doing so I had the availability of collected data, as well as my thoughts, insight and memories to analyze and reflect upon as the study progressed. Teacher research “may involve looking through a new lens, readjusting our focus, and celebrating what we see as we document what we have learned” and my research journal helped me accomplish just that (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 9).

Looking Ahead

The chapters to follow discuss and examine the findings of the study implemented within this thesis. Chapter four presents the reader with results of the preliminary research, creation and implementation of a transition where music and movement are combined from the multiple data sources. Chapter five provides the reader with conclusions and limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for further research.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter seeks to answer the question that stimulated the implementation of this study. Throughout this chapter, I examine the data collected in the course of the study in order to work towards identifying any effects the implemented transition established upon music and movement may have had on the students who participated within this study. The sources of data I analyze are student interviews, student questionnaires, open ended teacher discussions, students' math grades, teacher/researcher journal, and video recordings of the transition. This chapter is divided into two sections, each of which examine a different theme in which the implemented music and movement infused transition may have made a difference or promoted change. The sections in this chapter include the transition's impact upon students as individuals and the transition's influence found within the classroom.

The Students Responded as Individuals

In order to incorporate students' thoughts, feelings and ideas into the transitional routine, they were provided with student questionnaires and interviews prior to and during the implementation of the study. The interview regarding movement and music, as well as the interview regarding the implemented transition, was conducted one-on-one with the researcher and the student away from the whole group setting. This was done with the anticipation of removing any social pressures and possible distractions, ideally leading to more honest and personal responses. The questionnaires regarding music were issued in the whole group setting, for time management purposes, utilizing individual

dividers in order to provide the students with an environment similar to that of testing. Although the music questionnaires were issued in the whole group setting, the students were still provided with the opportunity to give individual answers in a confidential setting because of the privacy the dividers provided. Additionally to providing students with individualized attention and recognition, all interviews and questionnaires were phrased using wording that encouraged and prompted students to think about personal feelings rather than broad assumptions.

With the purpose of creating the transition based upon the needs, thoughts and feelings of my students I closely reviewed, analyzed and took into consideration each student's suggestions towards relaxing stretches, movements and music ultimately materializing a transition based upon the overall needs and suggestions of the class. As the transition was implemented and utilized within the classroom my students began to make the transition more personal, responding to the combination of music and movement in independent ways.

Becoming calmer and more relaxed.

As previously stated students had the opportunity and were encouraged to respond as individuals to the transition. After examining video recordings of the transition being implemented and reviewing the notes taken in my teacher/researcher journal, I noticed a general sense of calmness and relaxation following the execution of the transition among students, though not all students took the transition very seriously. Prior to the implementation of the transition, during math lessons my students are falling asleep with their heads down on the desks, or chatting with a neighbor, or looking around the room/something in their desks.

Although every student responded to the transition in his or her own way, many students took the time to indulge in the components of the transition, ultimately leading to a more relaxed and calm state of mind. Concluding the first day of the implemented study, I noticed that many of my students appeared not as unfocused as usual; less redirection was needed during my math lesson to keep the students on task. On the second day of the implemented transition our math lesson was much quieter than usual. I did not need to redirect or reprimand students as much for talking. I also did not have to shut off the lights or clap in order to regain the whole group's attention. My cooperating teacher expressed similar feelings concluding the first week of the study, stating observations of "students seeming a bit more focused and slightly quieter during math, as well as more at ease too". After a second week of implementation, my cooperating teacher stated that the students "seem calmer overall before we start the math lesson. Also there seems to be a big difference from coming in straight from lunch and starting the lesson opposed to having the transition then beginning the math lesson".

Gaining confidence.

Although the class as a whole seemed to become quieter, calmer and more relaxed the teacher/researcher journal, video recordings and structured teacher interviews showed one student, a girl I will call Mary, in particular seemed rather moved by the transition each day. In alignment with observations from my teacher/researcher journal, half way through the duration of the study my cooperating teacher described a visible difference within Mary, stating "she sits in the front, she always wants to participate during class and with this she can", taking the transition serious and benefiting from doing so. My cooperating teacher went on to explain how Mary was taking the transition very

seriously, becoming increasingly involved and confident in the process. Mary became very much involved with our class transition as evident by expressing her excitement for our transition nearly day after day, as well as during our interview regarding the implemented transition. At the very end of our transition one day, to my complete surprise, she complimented me: “Miss Cioffi, your voice is beautiful like an angels. It is so nice and relaxing. I love it!” A few days later, as we began our neck rolls she proceeded to coach her classmates with positive suggestions for stretches: “Our eyes can be open or closed if we want”. During our interview about the implemented transition Mary also told me how calm she feels after the transition and how the transition in its entirety makes her happy. A closer look at Mary’s mathematic grades suggests that the transition’s components may have positively impacted her learning as well possibly through an increase in confidence, scoring 86% and 89% on the two math quizzes taken during the study, while her previous math quiz score was 55%.

In alignment with findings regarding Mary’s possible gain in confidence, other students also gained confidence throughout the duration of the study. Alex, for instance, typically remained quiet during class but became gradually more involved and attentive during our transition time. As our transition progressed Alex became increasingly confident and enthusiastic in the classroom, even during writing; an academic area he previously struggled with.

Expressing emotions.

Students had the opportunity to express themselves as individuals during the transition time through movement. One student in particular, Gail, was typically really cheerful, full of energy and very boisterous, all of which she expressed during our

transition time by wiggling and giggling quite a bit. Gail especially utilized the wiggle time of our transition to her advantage each day by moving a bit more and a bit faster than her peers possibly because it was her favorite part of the transition. Additionally, students responded differently to the transition on different days, depending upon their established moods, some days taking the time more or less seriously than other days. On day nine of the study most of my class seemed rather rambunctious, including students who were usually more reserved. Right before the wiggle time of our transition many students began wiggling before we started remaining very, very chatty during all of wiggle time conveying their rambunctious energy.

The Transition Becomes a Classroom Component

The transition I created ultimately originated from the ideas, beliefs, suggestions, and feelings of my students with the hope to help my students establish a feeling of ownership, pride and involvement with the transition. In the process of implementing this study, the transition based upon music and movement proved to serve as a foundational component to the classroom in a very short time. The transition spread its influence over the students, teacher/researcher, and overall environment. Students not only displayed the ability to recognize the transition, its components and occurrence, but most students also became excited and prompt for the transition regularly cheering and clapping once identifying the start of our transition time.

Structure and routine.

The students of my class were very much familiar with a structured day founded upon routine and order, accustomed to following a school schedule on a daily basis. A close examination of the video recordings and my teacher/researcher journal provided

insight that suggests our class transition prompted conditions to expand the daily cycle of routine by providing predictability in multiple ways. Many students began to anticipate the start of our class transition and exhibited the knowledge of what was expected of them by walking back quietly to their desks and waiting patiently to begin after finishing up calendar math, the preceding activity to the transition. On day nine of the study, only three students went back to their seats and sat down right before our transition and all other fifteen students stood behind their chairs ready to begin our stretches. Additionally, conversations regarding the transition's components occurred sporadically throughout the classroom amongst students when a classmate appeared to forget the routine, such as "You're supposed to stand up behind your chair! We're about to start our stretches!"

In addition to recognizing the transition as part of the daily routine, students also took great notice to the stretches of the transition and their specific order. Although I had a list of the movements in the proper order with me during the transition, I would occasionally mess up the order of movements by accident at which time a student would always be sure to correct my mistake. Many times it appeared as if most students remembered the transition's routine better than me, prompting my memory with questions such as "What about our thing? Our wiggle time?" and "Isn't it our wiggles time and not our bending one yet?"

Taking ownership.

As previously stated, most students felt no restraints with regards to informing me of any mistakes I made with the order of the movements in our class transition. As a teacher/researcher I welcomed my students' comments, analyzing the remarks from a different perspective to acknowledge how the students became involved and proud of the

transition. When students spoke about the transition, they typically used inclusive language, such as us and we, expressing their involvement with the transition and the inclusiveness associated with it. During our final structured interview my cooperating teacher reinforced these findings by stating how the students “really seemed to get into the project, especially after the first few days when a lot of the silliness went away. The students began to know what was coming and they took the transition more seriously, following directions better and becoming more involved”.

Encouraging inclusiveness.

As a teacher I have always pushed for a sense of inclusiveness within my classroom with the hopes to help all students feel welcomed and accepted. While implementing the transition I continued to conduct myself in the same manner as before, but after reviewing the videos and teacher/research journal, I have concluded how essential this seemingly small component is. By acknowledging and modeling an embrative nature I potentially encouraged my students to do the same and take hold of an inclusive standpoint towards our transition and our class as well. During the entirety of the study I referred to the transition and all of its associations utilizing words such as our, we, and us rather than create a divide in the classroom environment through the use of non-inclusive language. My constant use of inclusive language and an accepting outlook also helped me become more in sync with the class overall, not just during our transition time. The transition time influenced and inspired me as a teacher/researcher because it provided an opportunity to reflect on the environment of the classroom while taking into consideration my feelings and those of my students, ultimately allowing me to promote a state of calm when needed.

Promoting a relaxed environment.

When first creating the transition I analyzed student responses in order to find out what movements and music my students' ideal relaxed atmosphere would include. When surveyed, the majority of my students chose a song of simple ocean sounds to serve as the background music to our transition, which they found to be most soothing and relaxing of the four songs presented. The music the students selected did not have a very fast tempo, potentially aiding in the establishment of a relaxing and peaceful tone in the classroom. In order to provide the students with an opportunity for an even more relaxed and stress free atmosphere I shut off the lights and closed the classroom door, in order to reduce distracting noise from the hallway, regularly before the start of our music and movement based transition. Many students seemed to respond positively to the environment, expressing their love for the music, the final energizing breath, and deep calming breaths during individual student interviews. Additionally, further review of the teacher/researcher journal provided insight regarding a noticeable change in the environment and an apparent sense of calm following the transition on many days of the study.

Conclusion

After examining the data collected during this study, most of it identifies the transition based upon music and movement as a possible positive attribute to the classroom environment. The combination of relaxing movements and soothing music into a transition promoted independent student responses and involvement. The transition also provided students with more structure, potentially creating a generally more relaxed environment within the classroom. In the chapter to follow, the answers collected from

this data will be discussed, followed by an in-depth discussion of the conclusions drawn from the study. Finally, implications of the study will be presented in order to allow educators and administrators to see the benefits this transitional technique may bring forth to the classroom.

Chapter Five

Conclusion, Limitations and Implications of the Study

Summary

This study was conducted in order to examine the effects a transition infused with music and movement may have upon the classroom environment and the students within the setting. The findings of this teacher-research suggest that music and movements weaved into a transition ultimately had a positive impact on students as individuals by allowing them the opportunity to gain confidence, become relaxed and express their emotions. Although no two students responded to the transition in the exact same manner, many students appeared more confident and calm succeeding the implemented transition. Furthermore, the transition founded upon relaxing music and movements provided additional structure and routine within the classroom, serving as an indication of the school day's progression. Students increasingly became accustomed to what was expected of them regarding the transition, identifying it as part of our daily routine. Most of the students seemed excited to get involved with the transitional routine, cheering and smiling on a daily basis upon the start of our stretches and the sound of our music.

Conclusions

Within this section I will discuss conclusions I reached after closely inspecting the overall effect of a transition infused with music and movements within the classroom setting. In chapter two I referenced Mulrine, Prater and Jenkins (2008) who identified transitions as an important time to provide students with a gradual step back into the classroom routine from situations requiring different levels of energy. Furthermore the researchers went on to explain how a transition may also allow students to become more

likely to regain concentration and remain on task. Transitions which incorporate simple stretching and breathing exercises into the classroom have been suggested as a way to help students refocus, increase attention and relax, but moreover music has also been proven to help calm students and reduce stress within the classroom (Sweeney, 1987; Jensen, 2000). Additionally Buck found when a transition activity involving a specific prompt, such as a specific piece of music, is integrated into the daily classroom routine it serves as a cue for students to transition from one activity to the next activity providing structure and boundaries to the classroom environment (1999). I believe that the current study effectively demonstrated the previously stated ideals. Most students identified the transition as part of the daily classroom routine after a few days, where some students acknowledged and anticipated the new transition as quick as the second day of implementation. The transition contained relaxing components of both music and movement, therefore it is difficult to decipher if the students ultimately identified the music as the transitional prompt but many students identified with the transition nonetheless.

It took time for some students to recognize the start of our transition, but most students knew what was expected of them after a few short days and were sure to communicate with their peers what to do next. An example of this exchange of advice among peers was referenced in chapter four. A student observing a peer sitting at his desk was all too excited to exclaim “You’re supposed to stand up behind your chair! We’re about to start our stretches!” In addition to recognizing when to start our transition many students also took great pride in knowing the sequence of events throughout the transition. For example, as cited in chapter four, on numerous occasions I was politely

interrupted and corrected by students when I accidentally confused the sequential order of stretches. The students were neither angry nor mad with me, but seemed rather cheery as they smiled and suggested what stretch we were actually supposed to be doing at the time.

In addition to smiling and seeming very much upbeat every day during transition time, many students who took the transition seriously also exhibited a calm and relaxed state of mind. Jensen (1998) believes that sensory-motor experiences directly feed into a person's pleasure center within the brain ultimately leading to a reduction in stress, enhanced relaxation, and improved self-esteem amongst students when incorporated into the school day. Jensen goes on to specifically identify simple yoga techniques, stretches, and breathing exercises as effective sensory-motor components to aid in the relaxation process. The majority of students in my study identified the movements and music of the transition as relaxing elements that helped them feel calm. When asked their most favorable part of the transition many students specifically cited calming aspects including the ocean music, deep breathing and the final relaxation pose: energizing breath. My cooperating teacher and I both took notice of a seemingly calmer and quieter class that occurred following the transition time. Not only did less chatter and side conversations happen during math lessons after the transition, but students also appeared to be more attentive and alert as they faced the front of the classroom with their held high.

The findings of this current study seem to suggest that the transition built upon relaxing music and movements helped to assist students in finding a more calm and tranquil state of mind after returning from lunch and recess where numerous students tended to remain rather excited and energetic. More specifically, students who took great

interest in the transition and appeared to take it seriously were generally more influenced by the movements and music of the transition than those who did the opposite. For example, as cited in chapter four both Alex and Mary were students whom took the transition seriously, seeming to be more involved with the motions and stretches during each day. Mary appeared to gain more confidence from the transition, helping and guiding her peers through the movements when possible. Additionally, during the final student interview regarding the implemented transition Mary talked about the transition and what she thought about it with self-assurance and an ever glowing smile. Never before had Mary been so quick to talk and express ideas in class but as she was presented with the opportunity to succeed with the movements during the transition she began to come out of her shell more, so to speak, and let her true personality shine through. Furthermore, Mary's mathematic grades increased as the transition was implemented perhaps because of the transition's relaxing effects.

Alex was another student who took the transition seriously and seemingly benefited from his experience. Alex also exhibited an apparent growth in confidence in his abilities within the classroom. This confidence even extended to one of his previously declared very least favorite academic subjects: writing. Prior to the initiation of the transition Alex very much often struggled with writing, typically avoiding the subject when asked to write during writer's workshop time. I noticed during down time, that as the transition was implemented and progressed Alex began to take more of an interest in writing with a smile and head held high during a once dreadful time for him.

Limitations of the Study

One major limitation of this study was the overall timeframe of the study. Although I was provided with efficient time to conduct my study, I did not have the opportunity to implement my study from the start of the school year. Since I conducted my teacher-research during the spring semester I did not have the chance to introduce the transition to my students until the month of March, at which point the students were already very much accustomed to their established daily schedule. If given the opportunity to start implementing the transition from the first day of school I believe more students may have had a greater potential to become more involved and focused with the transition. A few students did not view the transition as something to be taken seriously for the entirety of the study, but I feel as though implementing the transition from the very first day of school would have eliminated the possible uncertainty surrounding some students' perspectives, conceivably allowing the students to take even more ownership and pride for their role in the transition.

The limitation of the timeframe also influenced the amount of data I was able to collect during the study. If given more time I believe I would have been able to track students' grades, moods and perspectives more efficiently, ultimately leading to better results because of the availability for alterations. Through the availability of more time I may have been able to reflect on how the transition was progressing and influencing individuals periodically in order to successfully alter the transition based upon the specific needs of my students.

This study has brought to my attention many different students' needs as individuals, therefore aiding in my belief that students would greatly benefit from the

opportunity to execute the transition however and whenever needed. If allotted more time I would have additionally created a space within the classroom that my students could visit whenever they felt necessary to revert back to a calm and relaxed state of mind. Within the space I would provide my students with written and visual descriptions for each pose, as well as many other safe poses we would have learned and reviewed as a class. The relaxing space would also be equipped with a compact disk player, our selected relaxing music, and other student friendly musical choices.

Implications of the Study

After analyzing the data I the data I collected throughout the study in order to draw conclusions about the use of music and movement based transitions within the classroom, I found that there were certain areas that could be further investigated. One area in particular would be how the data results would change over a much longer extended period of time. Teacher researchers who plan to conduct similar research in their classrooms would likely benefit from designing such a study to span over the course of an entire school year. As addressed within the previous section, much growth and development was created within the classroom and occurred within the students. Future teacher-researchers would greatly benefit from a full year's worth of data in order to track progress and changes in an efficient manner.

Another way this study could be improved is through the extension of relaxing music and movements to students' home lives through the involvement of parents and guardians. Students could be provided with notecards of many different stretches, equipped with descriptive words and pictures, to be sent home in order to further inform parents. Furthermore, parents could be invited into the classroom in order to participate in

the transition first hand, sharing the experience with their children while becoming more educated regarding the transition and its components.

In summary, the use of a music and movement based transition within the classroom can help students become more calm and relaxed, as well as confident and involved. In addition to positively influencing students, this study reveals how a transition of this nature may in fact become part of classroom routine, adding structure and providing students with more predictability. It is the role of the teacher to take control of the classroom and provide students with an environment that promotes success. Through the implementation of a transition founded upon relaxing movements and music students are presented with a greater opportunity to relax, become more confident and ultimately succeed within the classroom.

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Appendix A

Transition Routine

1. Belly Breathing: 3 Times
 - a. Keep our hands on our bellies with our eyes closed
 - b. Breathe in and out slowly, taking our time, going at our own pace
2. Wiggle Time: 30 Seconds
 - a. Get all of our wiggles out however we would like
 - b. Going with the flow of the music
 - c. Let's make sure we keep breathing in and out
3. Jumping Frog: 3 Times
 - a. Breathe in and bring our arms up and open
 - b. Breathe out while bending our knees and bringing our arms in front of us
 - c. Clasp our hands together in front of us, around our legs
 - d. Breathe in and bring our arms up and above our heads again
4. Side Stretch: 3 Times Each Side
 - a. Breathe in and bring our arms up
 - b. Breathe out and bend or lean to one side, lowering our arms to that side
 - c. Breathe in and return to center
 - d. Breathe out and lower our arms
 - e. Repeat on other side
5. Sit down at seat while still deep breathing
6. Seated Spinal Twist: 3 Times Each Side
 - a. Breathe in and let's sit tall
 - b. Breathe out, put one hand on our other knee and slowly start to twist really easily and gently
 - c. Breathe in and return to the middle, facing front
 - d. Breathe out and repeat on other side
7. Neck Rolls: 3 Times Each Direction
 - a. We have the option to keep our eyes closed or open, remember to do what feels right for you
 - b. Start to roll our necks in a slow circle, remembering to breathe
 - i. Go left to center to right to back or opposite way
 - c. Keep breathing, after three times we switch sides
8. Gravity Glider: 3 Times
 - a. While sitting at our seats let's cross one leg over the other keeping our feet on the ground
 - b. Breathe in and sit up tall

- c. As we breathe out slowly reach our arms towards our toes and bend forward
 - d. Breathe in and sit back up tall
 - e. Breathe out and repeat two more times
 - f. Breathe in and sit up tall as we close our eyes
9. Eyes: 3 Times
- a. Breathe in as we close our eyes and start to rub our palms together to get warm
 - b. Let's put our warm hands over our eyes as we breathe out
 - c. Breathe in and out with our eyes closed 2 times
10. Energizing Breath: 3 Deep Breaths
- a. Breathe in and let's sit up nice and tall before we find a comfortable position on our desks
 - b. As we breathe out let's put our heads down on our desks slowly finding the most comfortable and relaxing spot for us as we close our eyes
 - c. Keep breathing, inhaling and exhaling slowly with our eyes closed

Appendix B

Student Scores on Math Quizzes

Student	February 14, 2011	February 11, 2011	March 4, 2011	March 10, 2011	March 24, 2011	March 29, 2011
1	15/15	15/15	20/20	52/52	95/102	94/100
2	13/15	15/15	11/20	35/52	88/102	89/100
3	15/15	15/15	20/20	52/52	92/102	98/100
4	15/15	15/15	19/20	52/52	93/102	96/100
5	15/15	14/15	20/20	51/52	92/102	92/100
6	13/15	15/15	17/20	52/52	91/102	90/100
7	8/15	11/15	19/20	50/52	49/102	72/100
8	4/15	12/15	14/20	26/52	73/102	78/100
9	15/15	13/15	19/20	52/52	81/102	84/100
10	10/15	14/15	20/20	52/52	95/102	98/100
11	15/15	15/15	18/20	52/52	93/102	96/100
12	Exempt	From	Study	(No	Permission	Slip)
13	13/15	15/15	16/20	52/52	93/102	91/100
14	14/15	15/15	15/20	50/52	97/102	93/100
15	13/15	15/15	19/20	52/52	96/102	98/100
16	14/15	15/15	15/20	19/52	93/102	93/100
17	14/15	15/15	20/20	52/52	88/102	91/100
18	14/15	15/15	20/20	52/52	97/102	98/100
19	15/15	14/15	20/20	52/52	81/102	85/100

Appendix C

Structured Teacher Discussions

Initial Structured Discussion

Discuss:

1. When students appear most unfocused
2. When students appear most stressed
3. What tools/methods currently used as a transition to regain student focus
4. What tools/methods currently used as a transition to relax and calm students down
5. Thoughts regarding movement to aid in transition
6. Specific movements and use of stretches
7. Thoughts regarding music to aid in transition
8. Specific types of music

Mid and Final Structured Discussion

Discuss:

1. How the incorporation of movement affects students
2. How the incorporation of music affects students
3. Effects of combining music and movement together
4. Any visible differences within students? Specific students? Possible explanation?
5. What changes within students? (Attitudes, self-esteem, attentiveness, stress levels...etc.)
6. Any changes within the classroom environment? (ebb and flow, tone, sense of learning community...etc.)
7. Most beneficial aspect of transition? Why?
8. Least beneficial aspect of transition? Why?
9. Continue to use this in future?
10. Overall thoughts
11. Any suggestions

Appendix D

Student Questionnaire Regarding Music

We will listen to 4 types of music together. Circle the face that shows how that music made you feel. You can also write about how the music made you feel.

1.



just right



excited!



tired



sad

2.



just right



excited!



sleepy



sad

3.



just right



excited!



sleepy



sad

4.



just right



excited!



sleepy



sad

Appendix E

Student Interview Regarding Movement and Music

1. How do you try to relax or calm down? (If prompt necessary... Do you close your eyes? Do you breathe a special way? Do you listen to music? Do you move a special way?)
2. Do you think listening to music can help you relax?
3. Do you think listening to music can help you work better in class (become more focused)?
4. Do you think moving around could help you relax?
5. Do you think moving around could help you work better in class?
6. Show me some movements you think might help you relax and focus so you can be ready to work in the classroom.
7. Do you take deep breaths to relax? If not let's try taking a deep breath together and then let me know how it makes you feel.
8. Do you ever stretch or move to try to relax? If not let me show you some simple stretches we can try right now.
9. How did you feel while you were stretching and moving?
10. How did you feel after you moved and stretched?
11. Anything else you want to tell me?

Appendix F

Student Interview Regarding the Implemented Transition

1. How did you feel before the transition today?
2. How does the transition make you feel while you are doing it?
3. How do you feel after the transition? More relaxed and/or focused? Better about yourself?
4. Why do you think the transition makes you feel that way?
5. How do the movements in the transition make you feel?
6. How do you feel about listening to music during our transition?
7. What is your favorite part about the transition?
8. What don't you like about the transition (if anything)?
9. Anything else you would like to tell me?